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## Reagan Administration: Funding Cuts News Articles (1981-1982): News Article 62

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Leslie Oberg

After proposing last February to slash Federal aid to the arts by half, President Reagan, perhaps persuaded by Congress and influential supporters such as Charlton Heston, now appears reconciled to less drastic cuts in the budgets of the two national endowments.

# The President, the Congress and the Arts — Can They Live Together in Happiness?

By IRVIN MOLOTSKY

WASHINGTON

President Reagan alarmed the arts community last Feb. 18 when he announced before a joint session of Congress that Federal aid to the arts and humanities would have to suffer severe cutbacks — at least as great as the cutbacks he was proposing for a host of other social programs. For example, instead of boosting the budget for the National Endowment for the Humanities to \$176 million as had been proposed by President Carter, Mr. Reagan wanted Congress to chop that grant by \$85 million. The Arts Endowment would be similarly dealt with.

Certainly, these cuts were tiny compared to the \$40 billion in budget cuts that the President was asking for, but the world of the arts is especially sensitive — and vocal, as the President was soon

grinding along for six months and it is now possible to glimpse certain indications of what the outcome may be. In general, it appears that the worst fears of the arts community will not be borne out.

There will be cuts, but the Endowment grants will not be halved. At a reconciliation conference late last month between the House of Representatives and Senate budget committees, a spending level of \$119.3 million was recommended for the National Endowment for the Arts and \$113.7 million for the National Endowment for the Humanities for fiscal 1982 and 1983. This represents a considerable cut from the 1981 appropriation for the two agencies, which totalled \$215 million, but it is certainly not the slashing cutback originally envisioned by the President and his conservative allies. Since these figures are yet to be approved by the full Congress and the President, the future is still uncertain, although a radical departure now seems unlikely.

men are often supporters of the local symphony orchestra or museum and don't want to have their favorite charities shortchanged by the Federal Government. Quite possibly, President Reagan has become aware of this widespread support in recent months. "President Reagan feels the Endowments have served a useful function," says the actor Charlton Heston, one of three co-chairmen of the President's special task force on the arts. "We have an Administration interested in the significance of the arts," adds W. Barnabas McHenry, chairman of New York City's Advisory Commission on Cultural Affairs, who originally conceived the idea of the Reagan task force and is now its vice-chairman.

An important and possibly crucial series of meetings concerning the fate of the Endowments is to take place next Sunday and Monday. But to analyze the possible outcome, one must go back to the beginning.

One of President Reagan's first actions after he moved into the